Dear Paul,

1/23/76

While I am not without friends, the nature and intensity of the work I do has reduced them and even normal social contacts; most of the people in the field are self-promoters and ripoff artists, so they are not friends; and those I have are not wealthy/ So, each kindness, each gesture, each offer or bit of help means that much/ more, especially when there is so little and so little seems possible.

After your call I wrote one friend who deals with an exceptionally honest radio-tv company to get their advice. I expect a court-reporter acquaintance Sunday. From either or both I may get guidance. So please don't rush out and spend money for a machine unless it is going to serve a purpose. I do not need a decent tape recorder. I have a good Sony and a cheap Panasonic. (I got the latter to use to listen to tapes that are sent me when I drive, which now is infrequently. It is a standard-size machine with automatic volume control and may be suitable for dubbing from the small cassettes so transcription can be from standard ones and a standard machine.)

The kinds of use I anticipate place a premium on small size. Where a regular tape recorder is too large or inconvenient. For example, when I walk and think of something and then can forget when I get home and the phone rings or there is, as is not uncommon, something requiring immediate attention. When I travel and want to make notes. The bus and train make my illegibily handwriting impossible, as I learned this past Saturday when the notes were important. While I'm sitting and waiting my turn for blood-tests. Even, perhaps, during my rest periods, when I'm reading with my legs up.

There then are other factors. One is whether the same cassette can be used on a regular machine. Another, with the 9v battery, is cost. And would I have to carry a pocket full of batteries on a trip or can they be recharged if they do not last long. (My Sony has a pack that can be recharged either 100 or 200 times.)

From the article you sent, despite the fact that it seems to lack most of the features of larger jobs, if it takes cassettes that fit a regular machine the Norelco seems best suited. Not only is it smaller than the Hermes, it has automatic level.

Monday I'll be near the best local electronics shop. They handle Lanier, not mentioned in this article. I don't know if Lanier makes a subminature. I do know their cassettes are of prohibitive price for the standard size. A friend sent me a long memo on one he had borrowed. I could not dub it for some reason using each machine for each purpose. In order to have its content I had to replace it at $6.00. But maybe they'll take time to discuss this with me. There is a second one near the grodery store to which I'll be taking my wife in the morning. Maybe I can learn something then, too.

I'll explain more so you'll understand better and not rush into an extravagance.

It will do me little good to make notes right now and not be able to do anything with them. I can get them transcribed in Washington now but I'm looking for someone local. With a local person I can do much more. I believe I could dictate large parts of the new book if it can be transcribed here, where I can be asked questions, make corrections, etc. I also have some interviews that should be transcribed where this can be more important, meaning my presence.

A local matron friend would be ideal except that once her kids got to where she could return to college she did. This year she decided to go for her master's. She has asked around among other married women in her circle, who could work while their kids are in school, without success. Today she is speaking to a department head at a local girl's college to see if she can locate a student to work part-time. The department is ideal-history/political science. But most of the girls are from upper-middle class families. And there is no public transcportation.

My wife can't do it until after the middle of April. Her tax work means much to her. She is superb at it and enjoys it. Besides which it provides our only regular income. After that I'm going to have to get her a new typewriter, one like the IBM, more suitable for my own printing needs anyway.

But the present book is different. A friend who is interested will advance the cost of part-time help if I can find it and recover the cost from the book. It is intended for commercial publication and he expects to be able to place it. (I will be writing it with the possibility of a movie in mind.)

Unfortunately, I stay busy with much that I can't avoid. I've not really begun to outline the book. I've begun the introduction and first chapter to get me thinking and some ideas on paper. But I've not had time to read them. I may wind up without a formal, detailed outline working my way because of the complexity of the material and the need for speed under these handicaps. I do have material comparable with the evidence in Post Mortem. Too much and I'm after more.

The obviously unserious intentions of the Congressional committees as of now add to the potential. And this is something they've avoided.

There is no new doctor, though. The friend with the book interest had his internist examine me. Mostly cross-examine. What is apparent is that I received negligent medical care going back to April, when I was diagnosed as having pneumonia and pleurisy in New York. It may not have been. From then to now. I am sure the New York doctor wrote mine immediately and I did as soon as I got back. A week has passed and my doctor hasn't been interested enough to even phone me. It and other things make me apprehensive. Despite the enormous investment we have in this originally excellent medical service, which supposedly emphasizes preventive medicine - we now pay $1,200 a year for supposedly full coverage -

My wife has taken initial steps through the American Association of Retired People, and with a waiver on the phlebitis I have some added protection as of now (and $600-750 a year more, which is an enormous part of our income). I havem made an appointment for the 9th with a local doctor whose competence is unknown but who seems like a decent human being. We've gone to him in emergencies.

Phlebitis is a not uncommon consequence of pneumonia. I was supposed to have had a complete physical after I got back from New York, arranged for it, was there, and didn't get it. The phlebitis symptoms were ignored when I reported them. Then the actuality was seriously underestimated. And the alternative suggested by the New York internist is that in April I had a thrombosis rather than pneumonia. Whatever the actuality, if it now can ever be determined I should have been watched and examined as I was not on their initiative and they didn't even do it on my wife's and mine.

If it is the last thing I want to get involved in, a malpractise suit may be the only way of financing the care I'll need henceforth. The NY Dr. says I should see a vascular expert four times a year regularly and this is but one thing.

Lesar was here yesterday to work on two FOIA cases. I had to fill him in on this so we could work on only one.

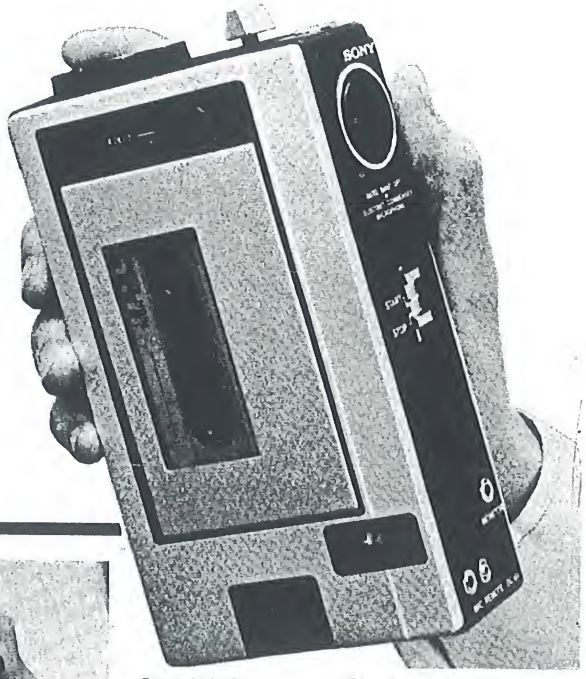
It is not all glum, although the encouraging makes me feel the restraints more. And with rare exceptions I am going by the book. I try to get in bed by 10:30, and generally there by 11 (except for phone calls, which I can't prevent) and not one day this week was I out of bed before 7. For me this is the revolution.

Having been ripped off by CBS and screwed by the New York Times I went in other directions and have a first-rate journalistic connection where people are listening to me, working with me, following the leads I give and never striking a dry hole. At this point my friend updated me and it is encouraging. I began with a simple analysis of something entirely new (King assassination) figured out what it had to mean and got enough proof without leaving home to turn it over. We're far past this now. There will soon be a story. I can't go into it until it appears.

So, again thanks for eveything, including the warmth it makes me feel.

Sincerely,

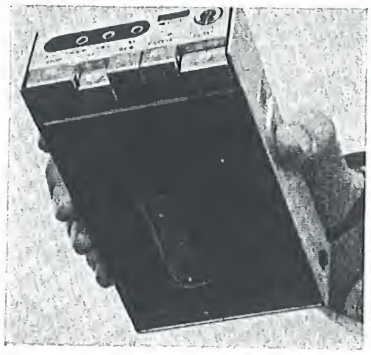
PS guide to pocket tape recorders



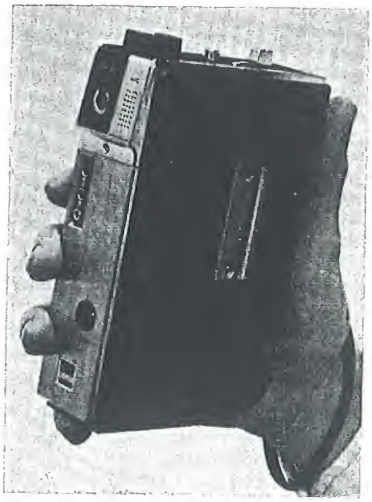
Sony TC-45

Panasonic RQ-212DS

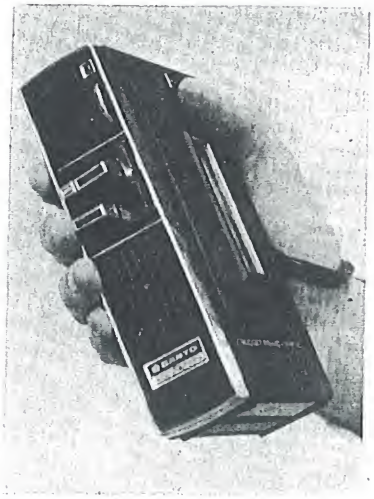
Hermes Compur



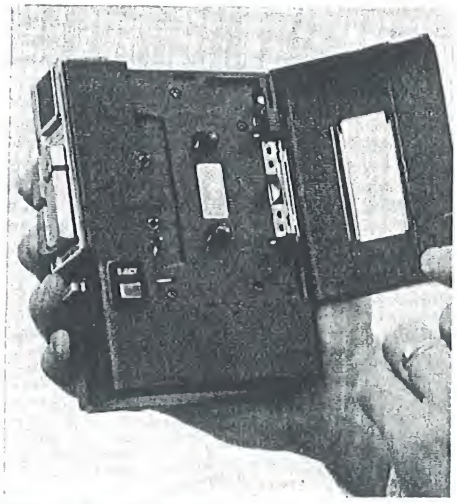
Realistic 14-874



Sharp RD-428U



Sanyo TRC-1100



General Electric 3-5311

Handy features, good sound, all-around high quality—and all in a machine that fits in your hand?

By WILLIAM J. HAWKINS

Some nice little things have happened to pocket cassette recorders since we last took a look at them [Feb. '72]. An example: Such welcome features as auto stop and pause control have spread to even moderate-priced units. Another cheering thing—particularly in this gift-giving season—is the moderate price of some high-quality units.

Students who record lectures, businessmen who use them as dictating machines, and correspondents who exchange cassettes instead of letters have long been familiar with the usefulness of the little tape units. But almost anybody can find at least occasional use for them: for note-taking, list-making, and recording special occasions.

We tried a wide sampling of units, varying in size, features, and prices, from leading manufacturers. The units we tried are not necessarily comparable; some are at the top of a maker's line, some aren't. We looked, primarily, not for comparisons, but for interesting and unusual features—and to get a good idea of the difference between a $50 unit and one costing $150.

The first thing we discovered is that you don't have to pay $150 for decent sound. The GE, for instance, the least expensive of the lot, performed very well indeed. So, what's in a $150-$200 machine? Features, for one thing; durability and compactness, to note two other advantages.

Like buying a car

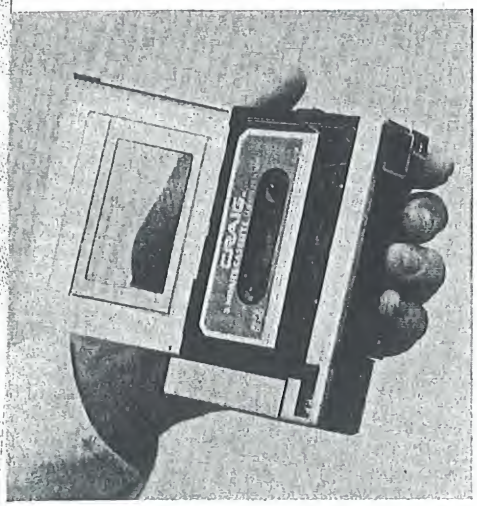
If all you want to do is record and play back your thought for the day, look to the lower-priced machines—they'll do a fine job. But where will you be making that recording? If the machine is going to be subjected to rough handling, you'll want to consider how well the unit is constructed. As the

Continued

Superscope C-106

Memocord K70

Wollensak 400



Craig 2625

Dictaphone 10

Norelco 95

price goes up, so does the use of aluminum instead of plastic for the case. With today's tough plastics, you might waive that consideration, but I'd suggest that you examine the cassette-door hinge before making the decision. The loading door usually gets the most abuse, and depending on how careful you are in loading and unloading tapes, a plastic hinge may not last too long.

Frills—some aren't

What about options? Those extra knobs, buttons, and lights eject, protect, reject, and almost select the tape for you, but none really adds to the recording—only to the ease with which it is made or played. In use, however, there are a lot of "frills" you wouldn't want to be without once you get used to them.

A footage counter is a good example. If you've ever tried searching through a tape for a particular passage without a counter, you know what I mean. If you don't like searching by the numbers, you can also find a particular spot by using a fast-review button. Craig, Sony, Superscope, and Wollensak have this. It allows you to listen to the tape while skipping through about three times as fast as usual.

A meter to show battery strength and recording volume gives many recorders a "professional" look, but it isn't all that necessary. All of the standard cassette machines (not the mini-cassette dictating ones) have ALC—automatic level control—circuitry for recording, making a meter reading nearly meaningless (it does show you're recording something, however). The circuit compensates for changes in sound volume by automatically increasing or decreasing the gain of the record amplifier.

Instead of a meter to check battery strength, GE, Memocord, and Craig use an indicator light and test button. Sanyo, however, has a more helpful indication: The light on its model automatically comes on when the battery is low—so you don't have to think about pushing a button.

Auto stop

Another feature concerned with battery life is auto stop, present on the Panasonic, Superscope, Hitachi, Meriton, Craig, and Sony units. It preserves the batteries by automatically turning off the machine, during either playback or record, at the end of the cassette. It's a very worthwhile feature.

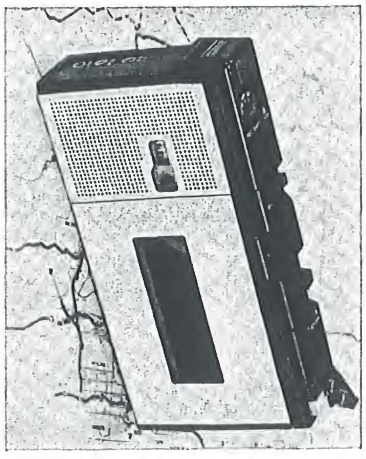
While auto stop may save your batteries, it may not save you the embarrassment of "recording" on a machine that has turned itself off. The Panasonic, Superscope, and Hitachi, for example, operate so smoothly that you can hardly hear them snap off. Obviously you've got to keep an eye on them when you know you're coming to the end of a cassette. Meriton and Sony make some mechanical noise, but Craig solves the problem by generating a tone from the speaker when the auto stop is activated—a good idea for normal use but less desirable for unattended recording.

Pause control, a feature of many of these machines, can be quite handy. It allows you to stop and start the tape intermittently, without having to fumble first for the stop, and then for the play/record buttons. You can edit tapes easily while you're recording or use it during playback for transcribing. Most units (even ones without pause) have a remote input jack (rem. on chart) as well. Plugging in a switch here accomplishes the same thing.

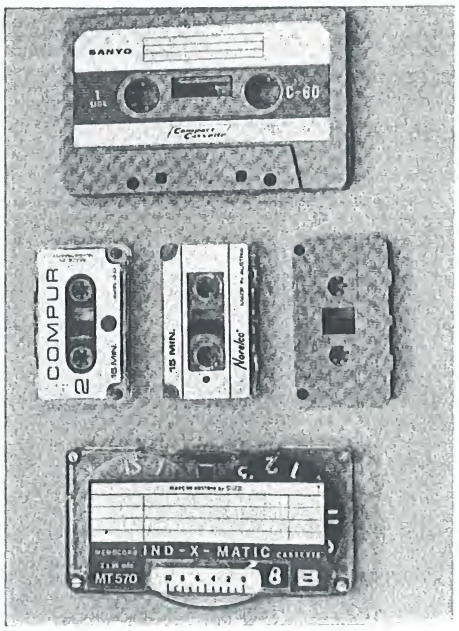
Superscope sells an optional pistol grip, complete with pause trigger switch, that attaches to a standard camera mount on the recorder. It works fine, but unless you're an

Meriton recorder keeps all controls in line at top. Size and color of buttons make them easily distinguishable.

Concentric record and play pushbuttons allow one-button record and play operation on GE (left) and Panasonic.



Hitachi's rewind button gives instant review of recording if pushed while machine is in record or play position.



Cassette size varies with machine. Most use standard (top). Dictating units use minis. On bottom: Memocord.

interviewer with unusually short arms, I'm not sure how useful it would be.

Other accessories you may want to look for are an earphone for private listening or a plug-in microphone for remote recording. An AC converter should be high on your list.

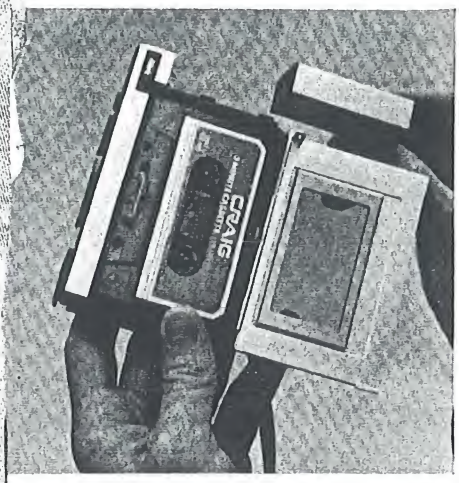
Dictating machines

If you're the executive type and are interested in a machine only to pass on messages to your secretary, you may want to consider the Compur, Dictaphone, or Norelco recorders. They're specifically designed for dictating—one-hand operation, no frills, small—and each maker offers a transcribing machine for use back at the office. Sound quality is poor compared with a standard cassette recorder since the highs are purposely boosted to make the voice more intelligible. The machines cleverly use tones to warn of expended tape, no tape (that can happen, too), or low batteries. And they record on miniature, 15-minutes-per-side cassettes.

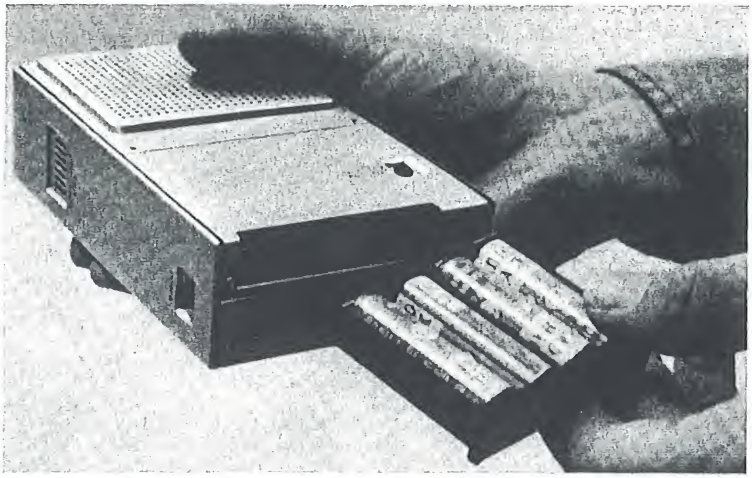
The Memocord recorder nearly falls into a category of its own. Because it uses a special cassette, designed to play only in Memocord recorders and transcription players, its makers call it a dictating machine. But its good sound quality and larger size make it more like a standard cassette recorder. And its operation tends to lessen its attractiveness as a dictating machine. To record or play back a tape, you must push on a corner of the exposed cassette—quite tiring for one-hand operation when your fingers must also span the width of the machine. A lock button will hold the cassette in for you, but in order to throw it, you must first push in the cassette, a two-hand operation.

There are some design features you won't find discussed in the

[*Continued on page 130*]



Craig recorder is not much larger than its standard cassette. Rechargeable battery pack is shown removed.



Realistic Minisette II has tough, all-metal body and controls. Changing batteries is a breeze: Just push the battery-eject button and the pack slides out in your hand. AC power supply is an optional accessory.

Pocket recorders—representative makes and models	Price	Size	Weight (oz.)	Power	Power indicator	Auto level	Pause	Foot count	Ext.	Carry case
Craig 2625	149.95	1 5/16 x 3 3/8 x 5 1/8	18	Nicad AC incl.	Test light	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
Dictaphone 10	165.00	1 3/16 x 2 5/8 x 4 7/8	10	1 9V	None	No	No	No	Ear, mic., rem.	No
GE 3-5311	54.95	1 3/4 x 4 1/4 x 5 3/4	24	4 AA	Test light	Yes	Yes	No	Mic., rem.	No
Hermes Compur	129.50	1 1/2 x 1 7/8 x 6 1/8	21	1 9V, AC opt.	None	No	No	No	Ear, mic.	Yes
Hitachi TRQ-10	149.95	1 1/4 x 3 1/2 x 6 3/4	24	4 AA, AC incl.	Meter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
3M Wollensak 400	144.95	1 3/4 x 3 3/4 x 6 7/8	22	4 AA, AC opt.	Meter	Yes	No	No	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
Memocord K70	199.50	1 1/8 x 3 3/4 x 5 3/4	11	3 AA	Test light	No	No	No	Ear, rem.	Yes
Meriton CT-665	99.95	1 3/4 x 4 x 6 1/2	26	4 AA, AC incl.	Moter	Yes	No	Yes	Ear, mic., rem.	No
Norelco 95	195.00	7/8 x 2 5/8 x 4 7/8	10	9V	None	Yes	No	No	—	No
Panasonic RQ-212DS	79.95	1 3/4 x 4 x 6 1/2	26	4 AA, AC incl.	Meter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
Realistic 14-874	89.95	1 9/16 x 3 3/4 x 6 3/8	22	4 AA, AC opt.	Meter	Yes	No	No	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
Sanyo TRC-1100	99.95	1 3/4 x 4 1/4 x 6 1/16	22	5 AA, AC opt.	Auto. light	Yes	No	Yes	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
Sharp RD-428V	84.95	1 11/16 x 4 11/16 x 6 7/32	27	4 AA, Nicad incl. AC incl.	Meter	Yes	No	No	Mic., rem.	No
Sony TC-45	140.00	2 x 4 3/8 x 7 1/4	34	4 AA, AC opt.	Meter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ear, mic., rem.	Yes
Superscope C-106	119.95	2 1/8 x 3 7/8 x 6 7/8	34	4 AA, AC opt.	Meter	Yes	Yes	No	Ear, mic., rem.	No

Pocket tape recorders

[*Continued from page 93*]

advertising brochures, but they're worth your consideration. For example, how wide does the cassette loading door open? The Craig, GE, and Sanyo units open all the way back, exposing the complete playing deck. Silly? Not when you're trying to clean the heads or the mechanics.

How well the cassette ejects is worth checking, too. It can vary among units of the same model. In the case of one Sanyo we had, the ejection springs were just a bit too tight. Hit the eject button and the tape would fly out of the machine like toast from Lucille Ball's old toaster on the "I Love Lucy" show.

If you're interested in using the recorder for editing purposes, check to see how well the pause control operates. On the Craig unit, for example, the pause works more like a cue control. There is no slight motor drag when coming to a stop. You can actually stop and start the tape between syllables of words.

Hands-on trial

Before you buy a machine, try recording on it, checking for specific good or bad points. For example, how many buttons must you push to go from record to rewind to play? On many machines, it can be done with one. On some, however, it can take as many as three separate operations.

Move the machine around as you record. We found that position or speed of a movement simulating walking introduced no noticeable playback flutter on any of the machines, but quick shakes (four times a second) did on most.

Size, weight, and the feel of the controls (tactile response is the technical jargon) are matters of personal preference, but controls spaced too far apart or, in some cases, too close together can make operation awkward. PS

Manufacturers list:
Craig Corporation, 921 Artesia Blvd., Compton, Calif. 90220. **Dictaphone** Corporation, 120 Old Post Rd., Rye, N.Y. 10580. **General Electric** Company, Electronics Park, Syracuse, N.Y. 13201. **Hermes** Products Inc., 1900 Lower Post Rd., Linden, N.J. 07036. **Hitachi** Sales Corporation, 48-50, 34th St., Long Island City, N.Y. 11101. **3M Wollensak:** 3M Company, Mincom Division, 3M Center, St. Paul, Minn. 55101. **Memocord U.S.A.**, 78 E. Palisades Ave., Englewood, N.J. 07631. **Meriton** Electronics, 35 Oxford Dr., Moonachie, N.J. 07074. **Norelco:** Philips Business Systems, 292 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. **Panasonic**, 1 Panasonic Way, Secaucus, N.J. 07094. **Realistic:** Radio Shack, Division of Tandy Corp., 2617 West 7th St., Fort Worth, Tex. 76107. **Sanyo** Electric, 51 Joseph St., Moonachie, N.J. 07074. **Sharp** Electric, 10 Keystone Pl., Paramus, N.J. 07652. **Sony** Corp. of America, 9 W. 57th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10019. **Superscope**, 8150 Vineland Ave., Sun Valley, Calif. 91352.

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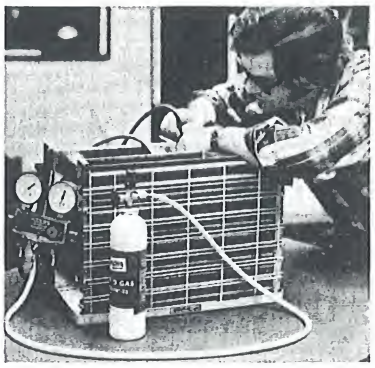

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